

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 IO-14 SAB-01 AID-20 NEAE-00 DRC-01 /148 W

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P R 041401Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8376

INFO USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

SECDEF PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 02697

SECDEF FOR ASD/ISA

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: BEXP, PFOR, EG, US, UK, SO

SUBJECT: BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE

REF: CAIRO 1011

1. BRITISH TEAM HAS NOT RPT NOT GONE TO CAIRO MARCH 4 AS SCHEDULED. TEAM WAS TOLD NOT TO COME YET BY FLASH TELEGRAM FROM CAIRO EMBASSY MARCH 2. ALL FCO KNOWS AT THIS STAGE IS THAT REASON IS "SOMETHING POLITICAL."

2. UPON BEING INFORMED OF AKHBAR AL-YAUM HEADLINES REFERRING TO GROMYKO OFFERS FOR CANAL CLEARANCE (REFTEL), FCO EGYPTIAN DESK OFFICER OPINED THIS MAY VERY WELL BE THE REASON BRITISH TEAM WAS ASKED TO WAIT.

3. EXACT STATE OF BRITISH OFFER DESCRIBED TO US AS FOLLOWS: BRITISH HAVE AGREED TO CARRY OUT CLEARANCE PROVIDED ROYAL NAVY TEAM FINDS THIS TO BE TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE. "OFF TOPS OF THEIR HEADS" BRITISH HAVE ALSO
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SUGGESTED OPERATION WOULD PROBABLY INVOLVE MINE-HUNTING

VESSELS, PROBABLY WITH A SUPPORT SHIP.

4. BRITISH HAVE NOT BEEN PINNED DOWN ON COST. HOWEVER, WHEN EGYPTIANS SUGGESTED TO THEM COSTS MAY BE AS HIGH AS 5 MILLION POUNDS STERLING, BRITISH REPLIED THEY THOUGHT THESE WOULD NOT GO BEYOND ONE-TENTH THAT SUM. BRITISH ESTIMATE IT WOULD COST UNDER ONE-HALF MILLION POUNDS PER YEAR TO HIRE TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT WOULD PROBABLY BE REQUIRED. MONEY WOULD BE TAKEN OUT OF CURRENTLY PLEDGED UK LOAN TO EGYPT. (COMMENT: AS THEY HAVE TOLD US, BRITISH ARE OBVIOUSLY NOT PLANNING TO CHARGE FOR USE OF ROYAL NAVY PERSONNEL OR SHIPS, JUST SPECIAL ADD-ON COSTS.)

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